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FOR DS/IP/EUR, DS/IP/ITA FROM RSO, EUR/SCE PAUL PFEUFFER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: SHOTS FIRED AT POLICE IN NORTHERN MACEDONIA ALMOST
CERTAINLY CRIMINAL NOT POLITICAL

Summary

11. (SBU) The shots fired on October 24 at a three person Macedonian border police patrol near the town of Kodra Fura sparked media speculation that the incident was a politically motivated attack by ethnic Albanians. Ministry of Interior (MoI) officials told us, and OSCE monitors confirmed, however, that there is no/no evidence the attack was politically motivated. Xhezair Shaqiri (aka Commander Hoxha), who is based in nearby Tanusevci, denied any responsibility for the incident. MoI officials said that they believe the attack may have been the work of smugglers - possibly illegal woodcutters - disturbed during their criminal activity. End Summary.

Border Police Shot At, One Killed

12. (U) On October 24, 2007 at approximately 1300hrs a Macedonian border police unit was on patrol near the small border village of Kodra Fura, approximately two kilometers from the northern Macedonian town of Tanusevci. The police patrol was driving a 4X4, off-road vehicle, en route to the village of Kodra Fura when they came under fire. One Ministry of Interior (MoI) police officer was hit by rifle fire in the attack. As the driver attempted to evade the attack, the MoI vehicle turned over and rolled down the mountainous terrain, suffering substantial damage. The incident, especially the motor vehicle accident it sparked, resulted in the death of one police officer and left two other officers in critical condition.

13. (SBU) The MoI stated that they have information that a criminal gang of smugglers might have committed the armed attack. The Minister of Interior (Gordana Jankuloska) made public the testimony of one of the survivors from the attack, who stated that it was carried out by a group of five to six armed men with automatic weapons. The MoI stated that criminal gangs smuggle goods over the Macedonia-Kosovo border and that these gangs are typically armed and dangerous. RSO talked to OSCE representatives who frequently visit the area and had visited the incident site and talked with local residents. The OSCE representatives confirmed that there was no/no evidence that the attack was politically motivated.

14. (U) Xhezair Shaqiri (aka Commander Hoxha), a former Member of Parliament and ex-commander of the illegal Albanian paramilitary groups of KLA and NLA, who lives in Tanusevci, denied any involvement in or knowledge of this attack. Although the investigation is on-going, all information points to this being an isolated event involving a group of thugs and/or smugglers engaged in illegal activities near the

border. Members of the Macedonian special police units have stepped up patrols along the country's northern border region and will actively pursue those responsible for this attack.

Comment

¶5. (SBU) Given what we know so far, this appears to be an isolated criminal event in which the host government police forces are responding in an appropriate manner with the appropriate level of force. While an incident in which smugglers shoot at a police patrol is obviously problematic from a law enforcement perspective, the attack does not appear to have any wider political implications. We believe that the media and political reaction to this attack will be and deserves to be short-lived.

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